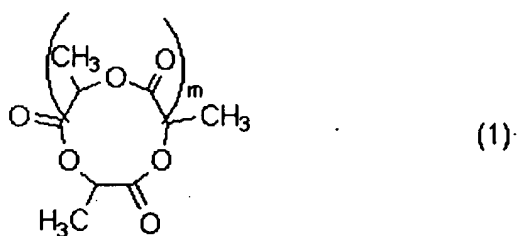


## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Original): A method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer represented by the following formula (1):



wherein m represents an integer of 1 to 30,

wherein lactides are polymerized in the presence of an alkali metal compound represented by the following formula (2):



wherein R represents an aliphatic group, aromatic group,  $-\text{Si}(\text{R}^{10})(\text{R}^{11})(\text{R}^{12})$ ,  $-\text{CH}(\text{R}^{20})\text{CONR}^{21}\text{R}^{22}$  or  $-\text{CH}(\text{R}^{30})\text{COOR}^{31}$ , wherein each of  $\text{R}^{10}$ ,  $\text{R}^{11}$  and  $\text{R}^{12}$  independently represents an aliphatic or aromatic group,  $\text{R}^{20}$  represents an aliphatic group, each of  $\text{R}^{21}$  and  $\text{R}^{22}$  independently represents a

hydrogen atom, aliphatic group or aromatic group,  $R^{30}$  represents an aliphatic group, and  $R^{31}$

represents a hydrogen atom, aliphatic group or aromatic group;

Y represents  $-O-$ ,  $-S-$  or  $-NR^{40}-$ , wherein  $R^{40}$  represents a hydrogen atom, aliphatic group or aromatic group; and

Me represents an alkali metal.

Claim 2 (Original): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 1, wherein said alkali metal compound is a compound of formula (2) wherein R represents an alkyl group having 1 to 12 carbon atoms, aryl group having 6 to 30 carbon atoms,  $-\text{Si}(R^{10})(R^{11})(R^{12})$ ,  $-\text{CH}(R^{20})\text{CONR}^{21}R^{22}$  or  $-\text{CH}(R^{30})\text{COOR}^{31}$ , wherein each of  $R^{10}$ ,  $R^{11}$  and  $R^{12}$  independently represents an aliphatic or aromatic group,  $R^{20}$  represents an aliphatic group, each of  $R^{21}$  and  $R^{22}$  independently represents a hydrogen atom, aliphatic group or aromatic group,  $R^{30}$  represents an aliphatic group, and  $R^{31}$  represents a hydrogen atom, aliphatic group or aromatic group.

Claim 3 (Previously Amended): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 1, wherein said alkali metal compound is a compound of formula (2) wherein Y is  $-O-$  or  $-S-$ .

Claim 4 (Previously Amended): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 1, wherein said alkali metal compound is a compound of formula (2) wherein Me is lithium.

Claim 5 (Previously Amended): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 1, wherein, in formula (1), m is an integer of 1 to 21.

Claim 6 (Previously Amended): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 1, wherein said alkali metal compound is any of:  
a compound of formula (2) wherein R is an aliphatic group having 4 or more carbon atoms; a compound of formula (2) wherein R is an aromatic group and Y is -S-; or a compound of formula (2) wherein R is -CH(R<sup>20</sup>)CONR<sup>21</sup>R<sup>22</sup> wherein R<sup>20</sup> represents an aliphatic group and each of R<sup>21</sup> and R<sup>22</sup> independently represents a hydrogen atom, aliphatic group or aromatic group.

Claim 7 (Original): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 6, wherein cyclic lactic acid oligomer is selectively produced substantially free of chain lactic acid oligomer.

Claim 8 (Canceled)

Claim 9 (Canceled)

Claim <sup>8</sup>~~10~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 2, wherein said alkali metal compound is a compound of formula (2) wherein Y is -O- or -S-.

Claim <sup>9</sup>~~11~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 2, wherein said alkali metal compound is a compound of formula (2) wherein Me is lithium.

Claim <sup>10</sup>~~12~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 3, wherein said alkali metal compound is a compound of formula (2) wherein Me is lithium.

Claim <sup>11</sup>~~13~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 2, wherein, in formula (1), m is an integer of 1 to 21.

<sup>12</sup>  
Claim ~~14~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 3, wherein, in formula (1), m is an integer of 1 to 21.

<sup>13</sup>  
Claim ~~15~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 4, wherein, in formula (1), m is an integer of 1 to 21.

<sup>14</sup>  
Claim ~~16~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 2, wherein said alkali metal compound is any of:

a compound of formula (2) wherein R is an aliphatic group having 4 or more carbon atoms; a compound of formula (2) wherein R is an aromatic group and Y is -S-; or a compound of formula (2) wherein R is -CH(R<sup>20</sup>)CONR<sup>21</sup>R<sup>22</sup> wherein R<sup>20</sup> represents an aliphatic group and each of R<sup>21</sup> and R<sup>22</sup> independently represents a hydrogen atom, aliphatic group or aromatic group.

<sup>15</sup>  
Claim ~~17~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 3, wherein said alkali metal compound is any of:

a compound of formula (2) wherein R is an aliphatic group having 4 or more carbon atoms; a compound of formula (2) wherein R is an aromatic group and Y is -S-; or a compound of formula (2) wherein R is -CH(R<sup>20</sup>)CONR<sup>21</sup>R<sup>22</sup> wherein R<sup>20</sup> represents an aliphatic group and each of R<sup>21</sup> and R<sup>22</sup> independently represents a hydrogen atom, aliphatic group or aromatic group.

<sup>16</sup>  
Claim ~~18~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 4, wherein said alkali metal compound is any of:

a compound of formula (2) wherein R is an aliphatic group having 4 or more carbon atoms; a compound of formula (2) wherein R is an aromatic group and Y is -S-; or a compound of formula

(2) wherein R is  $-\text{CH}(\text{R}^{20})\text{CONR}^{21}\text{R}^{22}$  wherein  $\text{R}^{20}$  represents an aliphatic group and each of  $\text{R}^{21}$  and  $\text{R}^{22}$  independently represents a hydrogen atom, aliphatic group or aromatic group.

<sup>17</sup>  
Claim ~~19~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim 5, wherein said alkali metal compound is any of:  
a compound of formula (2) wherein R is an aliphatic group having 4 or more carbon atoms; a compound of formula (2) wherein R is an aromatic group and Y is  $-\text{S}-$ ; or a compound of formula (2) wherein R is  $-\text{CH}(\text{R}^{20})\text{CONR}^{21}\text{R}^{22}$  wherein  $\text{R}^{20}$  represents an aliphatic group and each of  $\text{R}^{21}$  and  $\text{R}^{22}$  independently represents a hydrogen atom, aliphatic group or aromatic group.

<sup>18</sup>  
Claim ~~20~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim ~~18~~, wherein cyclic lactic acid oligomer is selectively produced substantially free of chain lactic acid oligomer.

<sup>19</sup>  
Claim ~~21~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim ~~19~~, wherein cyclic lactic acid oligomer is selectively produced substantially free of chain lactic acid oligomer.

<sup>20</sup>  
Claim ~~22~~ (New): The method for producing a cyclic lactic acid oligomer according to claim ~~20~~, wherein cyclic lactic acid oligomer is selectively produced substantially free of chain lactic acid oligomer.